

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

JUN 7 2006

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Ramsay (Ronald and Dorcas) House

Other name/site number _____

2. Location

Street & number 1415 Riverview Drive

☐ not for publication

City or town Atchison

☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Atchison Code 005 Zip code 66002

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patrick Zolner

DSHPO

4/3/06

Signature of certifying official/Title
Kansas State Historical Society

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other, (explain:)

Ronald and Dorcas Ramsay House
Name of Property

Atchison County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERNE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: CONCRETE

BRICK

Walls: STUCCO

STONE

Roof: OTHER

Other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Ronald & Dorcas Ramsay House

Name of Property

Atchison County, Kansas

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1948-1949

Significant Dates

1948

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Samuel W. Bihl, Jr., architect

Patrick Marci, builder

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

Ronald and Dorcas Ramsay House
Name of Property

Atchison County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.4 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	5	3	1	8	3	3	9	4	3	7	9	2	5	1
Zone	Easting				Northing										
2															

3															
Zone	Easting				Northing										
4															

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Susan Jezak Ford/ Elizabeth L. Lane

Organization Citysearch Preservation

Date June 30, 2005

Street & number 3628 Holmes Street

Telephone 816-531-2489

City or town Kansas City

State Missouri

Zip code 64109

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name Russ and Merry Thaden

Street & number 1415 Riverview Drive

Telephone 913-367-2787

City or town Atchison

State Kansas

Zip code 66002

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Ronald & Dorcas Ramsay House
Atchison, Kansas

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Architectural Description

Overview

The Ronald and Dorcas Ramsey house is a two-story Moderne stone and stucco residence located atop a bluff overlooking the Missouri River in Atchison, Kansas. The 1948 house at 1415 Riverview Drive is oriented to the east, with a spectacular view of the farmlands across the river. The house and its surrounding yard are nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, for its singular, intact design in a style rarely found in this area of Kansas.

The Ramsay house retains a very high degree of integrity in its materials and design. Its horizontal Moderne profile is emphasized by a flat roof, deep roof eaves and rounded concrete ledges, painted green, that project between the two stories. All exterior stucco walls are backed with four-inch red bricks and eight-inch concrete blocks. The central portion of the house has exterior walls of Silverdale limestone and the curved window sills carved out of Cottonwood limestone.

The house's irregular footprint includes one-story projections for a garage on the north and a sunroom on the south, as well as an extended two-story central façade entrance block. Also projecting from the façade are a one-story den fronted by a rounded wall of windows and an adjacent powder room with an exterior rounded wall of glass block. Rows of original aluminum windows span large sections of the exterior and wrap around nearly every corner of the house. Double-hung windows have original built-in storms and screens.

Exterior

The two-story Ramsay house's irregular **east façade** is fronted by a central entrance block clad in horizontal rough ashlar-cut limestone with quoins. The first story of this entrance block has a single door framed in stone. A glass storm door fronts the interior door comprised of pieced wood geometric panels filled with and surrounded by glass. This door is surrounded on either side by stone-framed window openings fronted by original decorative aluminum grilles. A concrete ledge projects above the entrance, extending out in a curve above the doorway. The second story of the entrance block has a central Chicago-style window framed in stone.

The south section of the façade is stucco, recessed from the entrance block. This wall has identical large picture windows on both stories, surrounded by single double-hung windows. Panels of vertically ribbed stone are located north of these windows. The windows wrap around the southeast corner of the house, with aluminum-clad supports located in the corners. The house's one-story sunporch extends from the southwest corner. The east side of this porch has two screened panels. The upper portion of the sunporch has a stucco wall capped with stone that fronts the flat roof. A concrete ledge placed above the first story runs across the south end of the façade, wrapping around the house's south elevation and continuing on the all three sides of the sunporch.

The north portion of the façade steps back from the entrance block and is intersected by a concrete ledge. The second story of the first step-back is clad in stucco and has windows located at the south wall juncture and the northeast

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corner. The second step-back is clad in stone; the second story has a window in the south portion. The rounded one-story den projects north and east of the entrance block. It is clad in stone and has seven double-hung windows, topped with a stone parapet. A concrete ledge is located just below the parapet, following the curve of the building. The first-story powder room is located at the juncture of the den and the façade's recessed north stone wall. The room's exterior wall is curved glass block topped with a stucco parapet. The three-stall stucco garage extends from the very north end of the house. This section is clad in stucco and has a concrete ledge that extends above the three doors and wraps around south to the stone wall, sheltering an additional entrance placed within the north side of the wall. The house's recreation room is located above the garage. The second-story wall is filled with large picture windows with double-hung windows on each end.

The Ramsay house's **north elevation** is clad in stucco. A stucco chimney runs up the center of the wall and extends above the eave. The west portion of this side is just one story, with a patio on the second story. The north and west sides of the patio are rimmed with a stucco wall capped with stone and an aluminum railing. The north side of the house has no fenestration, except for a single door located in the first story of the west end.

The **west side** of the house is divided into two sections. The protruding north section is coated in stucco. The recessed south section is clad in stone and had a concrete ledge above the first story. The northernmost portion of the house's west side has a second-story patio with a stucco wall and aluminum railing. The west wall behind this patio has a single door and a double-hung window. The protruding first story below the patio has a central pair of double-hung windows. The large stucco wall south of the balcony contains pairs of double-hung windows in the center of the first story and in the south portion of the second story. The north portion of the recessed stone section has a set of three double-hung windows on the second story. A recessed entrance is located below these windows, containing two windows and a single door. The second story of the southern section of the stone wall has a single double-hung window and a pair of windows that wrap the corner. The first story of this section has a pair of double-hung windows and a single window near the corner of the house. The far south portion of the west side accommodates the screened sunporch topped by a flat roof. The upper portion of the sunporch has a stucco wall capped with stone that rims the roof of the porch. The west side of the sunporch has a first-story central screened door surrounded by two screened panels.

The **south side** of the house is fronted by the screened sunroom on the southwest corner. Three screened panels on the first story are topped with the stone wall found on the east and west sides. The house's recessed stucco north wall facing the sunporch's roof has two double-hung windows on the west end that wrap the house's corner and a single double-hung window. The east portion of the house's north side sits behind the sunporch. This stucco wall has single double-hung windows wrapping the corners of the house's second story. The first story has a large picture window in a Chicago-window configuration that wraps the southeast corner of the house.

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Ronald & Dorcas Ramsay House
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Interior

The interior design for Ronald and Dorcas Ramsey's home met two goals. First, the house's many windows take advantage of the stunning views of the Missouri River valley on the east and parkland on the west. Walls of windows in the living room, dining room, den, recreation room and master bedroom allow abundant light and bring the surrounding scenery into the house. Second, the architect's floor plan provided specific rooms designated in size and purpose by the couple. The house's original spaces include nine rooms and various utility areas that provide public and private areas, abundant storage and utilities to ensure a well-run residence. The house retains its original light oak woodwork.¹ Finishing touches, such as recessed lighting and wall-to-wall carpeting are also present in almost every room.

First story rooms include an entry hall, living room, dining room, den, bar room, powder room, kitchen and laundry room (former servants' room.) Spaces are connected by the large entry hall, a front corridor and a back corridor.

One enters the house through a large vestibule and then through a doorway surrounded by a geometric glass and wood screen. The house's entry hall contains the main staircase with its geometric oak and aluminum balustrade. The black and white floor tiles in the entry, front and back halls were installed in 1987. The south end of the house contains the living room, dining room and sunporch. The lowered living room, located on the southeast corner, measures 30 by 19 feet. The southeast corner of the room is filled with windows and a marble fireplace is on the west wall. Doors leading to the sunporch and a firewood closet surround the fireplace. The dining room, located on the house's southwest corner, measures 24 by 18 feet. Five recessed spotlights are placed above the dining room table; one, three or five of the lights may be turned on at once. The east wall is covered with an original mural painted by an Asian artist in California on strips of paper and reassembled in the room. The dining room has low wainscoting measuring 27 inches high and windows fill the west wall. A large window and a doorway lead to the south sunporch, which extends from the south side of the dining room. The den, bar room, powder room and kitchen fill the north side of the first story. The den, located on the front of the house, retains its original wood paneling of mitered oak squares, storage shelved and curved wall of aluminum double-hung windows. The bar room, located between the front and rear halls, also retains its original oak paneling and cabinets. This room, with a built-in commercial grade bar, retains its original gold wallpaper and frieze printed with exotic illustrations and recipes for cocktails. A metal wall plate in the room reads:

Built in 1948-49

Ronald and Dorcas Ramsay

Samuel W. Bihr, jr., architect

Patrick Mara, builder

The back wallpapered wall curves to accommodate the adjacent powder room. The powder room is a circular room, with a connecting toilet. A built-in vanity is placed opposite the curved exterior glass block wall. The kitchen is located at the rear of the house in an area that was originally filled by a pantry and kitchen. The area was remodeled for the second time in 1997, but the space retains its original window openings. The north end of the kitchen provides access to a laundry room and an exterior door leading to the back yard. The house's rear hall contains a back stairway

¹ All woodwork in the house was milled by the Kaaz Woodwork Company of Leavenworth, Kansas.

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and also leads to an exterior entrance located at the juncture of the house and the garage. The three-stall garage is attached to the north end of the house, accessed through the rear hall. Two work rooms fill the west wall of the garage.

The **second story** of the Ramsay house includes four bedrooms, four bathrooms, a recreation room and a storage room. The master bedroom fills the southeast corner of the house and has large windows identical to those in the living room. A dressing room with built-in closets connects the bedroom to the master bathroom. This bathroom retains its original fixtures, with a tub, shower and built-in mirrored vanity. The bathroom also has the house's only "gadget," described in a 1949 article in *The Atchison Daily Globe*. A small cabinet containing a "hose dryer" is described, "The built-in dryer is electrically heated. It was a feature of the 'House of Tomorrow,' constructed in California during the war."²

Three additional bedrooms—each with an attached bath—are located in the southwest corner of the house, the central rear of the house and front of the house overlooking the curved roof of the den. Bathrooms on the second story all have original tiles in two complimenting shades. These shades are described in the *Daily Globe* article as "pink and gray, suntan and brown, pale blue and delphinium blue, and yellow and white." The house's storage room is located in the northwest portion of the center of the house. This room is lined with cedar closets, shoe racks, cabinets, open space designated for trunks and also a central island of wardrobe closets. A window in the west wall sits above a linoleum counter topping storage drawers.

The back stairway is located on the north end of the second-story hallway. One steps down to a landing for this stairway, which also leads to the house's recreation room. Placed above the garage, this spacious room has its original parquet tile floor and acoustic ceiling tiles. A limestone and slate fireplace is on the north wall and a bar is located in the center of the west wall. The house's second-story patio on the northwest corner is accessed through a door in the corner of the room.

The **basement**, which runs under most of the house, has brick walls. The space originally included two large storage rooms, a fruit cellar, a laundry room, a servant's room and bathroom. These spaces are still present today, although serving different purposes. Evidence of the house's original mechanical and utilitarian functions is still present in the basement. The operating dumbwaiter, laundry chute and disabled incinerator are still here, in addition to numerous electrical fuse boxes.

Site

The Ramsay house is sited at the south end of Atchison's Riverview Drive, surrounded by an acre of land. The west and south edges of the property abut Jackson Park. The east edge of the property, protected by a brick retaining wall, fronts the road, which is located directly next to the bluff that drops to the Missouri River. The site includes an original ten-car asphalt parking lot, located northeast of the house adjacent to the garage.

² "New Ramsay Residence Spacious," *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 15 March 1949, p. 10.

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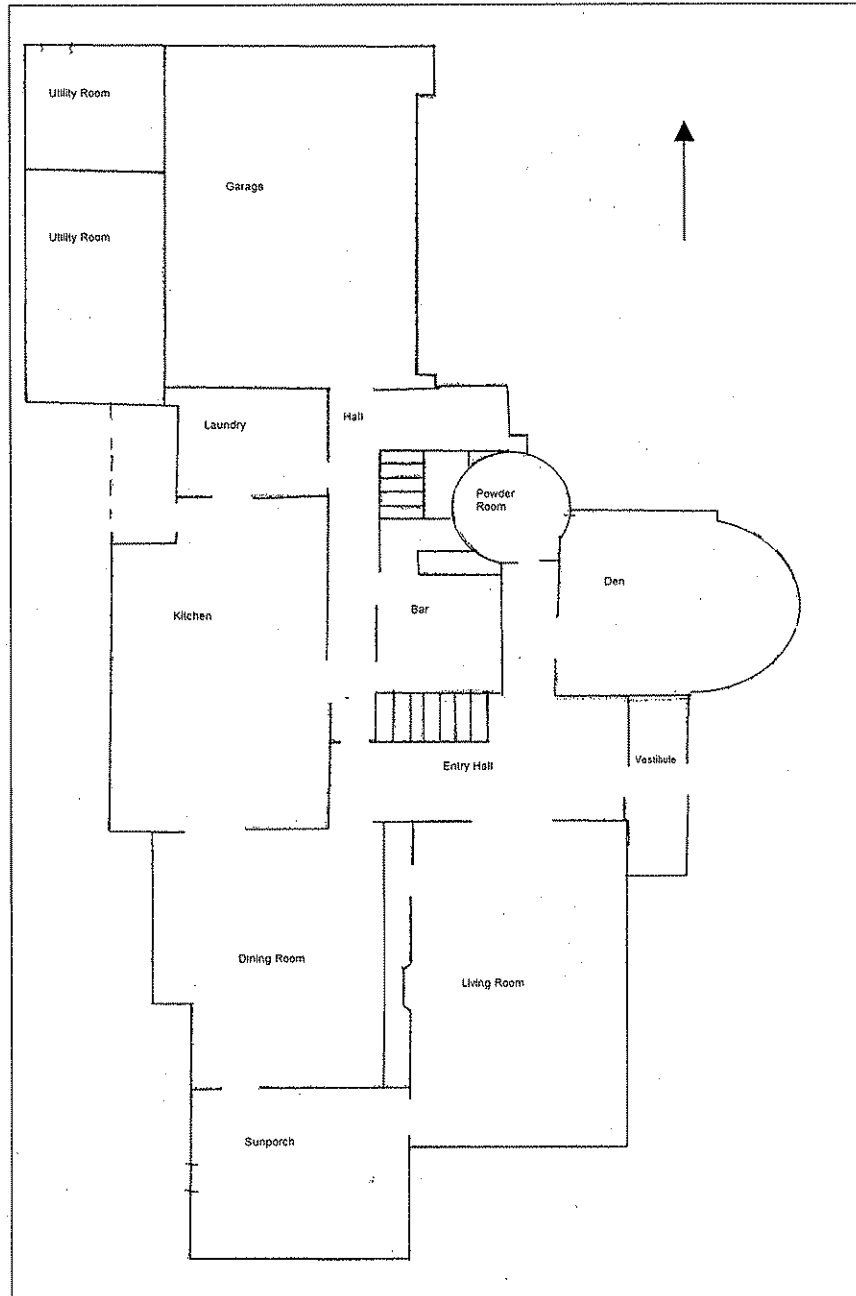


Figure 1. Ramsay House first story

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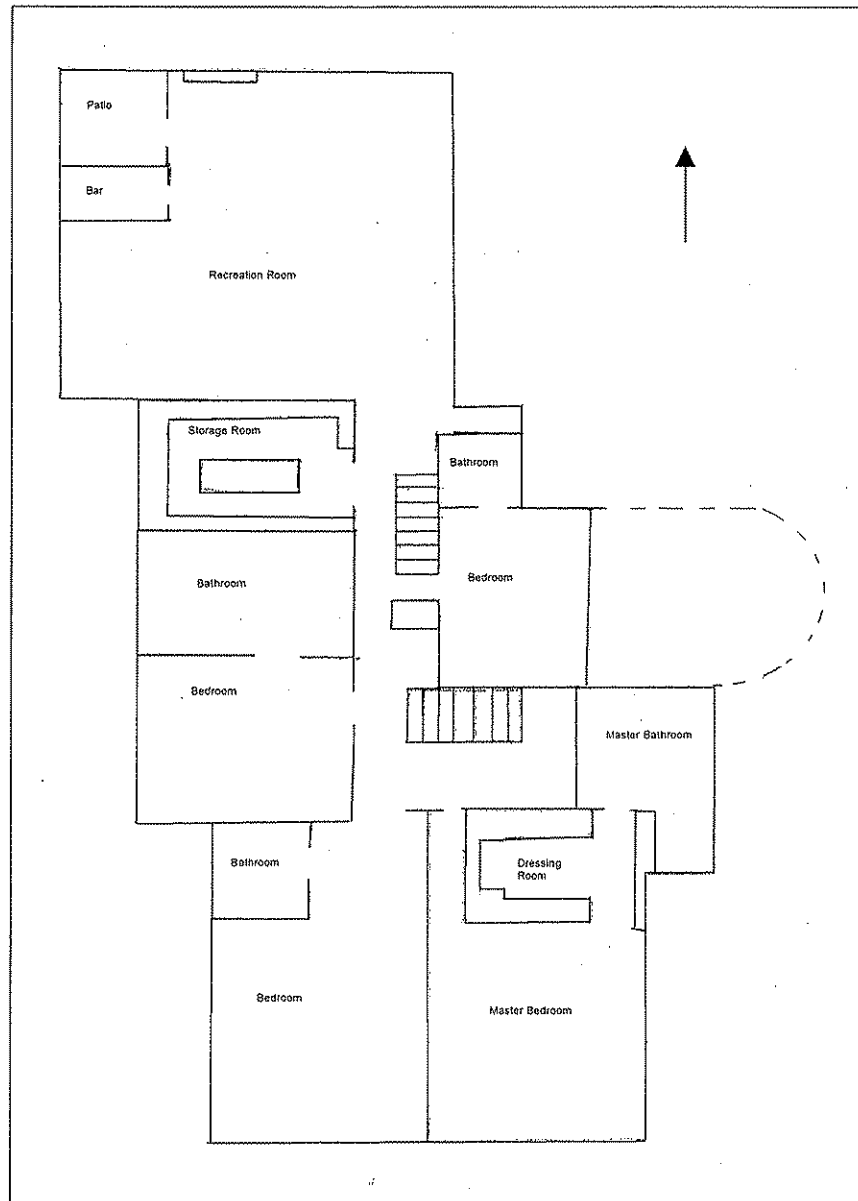


Figure 2. Ramsay house second story

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Statement of Significance

The Ramsay house is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, for its intact design in the Art Moderne style, a style rarely found in residential buildings and especially in this area of Kansas. The 1948 house continues today to reflect a striking design ideally suited to its location.

Architecture

Architect Samuel W. Bihr, Jr. was based in Kansas City, Missouri. He was co-owner of the architectural firm Madorie and Bihr in the 1920s and worked as a draftsman in the mid-1930s for Fred Harvey, Inc., developer of hotels and restaurants frequently associated with the railroad lines. By 1938, Bihr was listed in City Directories as practicing on his own. He is credited with designs for many Kansas City, Missouri buildings, including schools, rectories or gymnasiums associated with the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at 411 W. 11th Street and St. James Church at 39th and Harrison. Bihr became associated with the Fox Midwest Amusement Corporation in 1947, working for the company until his death in the late 1950s. As an architect for Fox Midwest, Bihr would have been responsible for work in the six Midwestern states in which the company operated. He is credited with Art Moderne designs for movie theaters in Atchison and Hays, Kansas.

Bihr's design for the Ramsay house was surely a radical departure for an Atchison residence. Although the Art Moderne style ended nationally around 1940, this late example style stands out among more the traditional housing styles within the community. The Art Moderne style evolved in this country from the earlier Art Deco style. The two modernistic styles, most popular between 1920 and 1940, were infrequently used for domestic architecture. As Art Moderne became more common after 1930, it was typically used for public buildings. When applied to residences, the style included smooth—typically stucco—wall surfaces, flat roof and a horizontal emphasis.

The smooth wall surfaces, flat roof, protruding ledges, use of glass block and rows of windows are all key elements of the Art Moderne style. The dwelling is also very solidly built, with walls layered in concrete block, brick and stucco. The stone cladding on the center portion of the house give a nod to local materials and tradition. The house was designed to be modern in every way and, in 1948 Atchison, this goal was met in the Ramsay house. The unique exterior form is a striking and appropriate envelope for the modern living spaces within.

History of the House and the Ramsay Family

Ronald Henry Ramsay was born on January 31, 1893 in Pittsburg, Kansas, the eldest child of Robert and Mary Ramsay. Ramsay's father and uncle inherited several dry goods stores in Scotland and immigrated to the United States in the late 1880s, where they continued the family business with a chain of stores across the Midwest. Six months after the birth of Ronald Ramsay, the family moved to Guthrie, Oklahoma where his father managed one of the family stores. They moved to Atchison, Kansas in 1907, when the company purchased a store there.

Ronald Ramsay graduated from Culver Military School in Culver, Indiana in 1912 and then attended the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. He returned to Atchison in 1913 and began working for his father at the Ramsay

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Brothers Dry Goods Company. His first job with the store was pushing wheelbarrow-loads of brick during the store's 1913 remodeling. When the project was completed, he was assigned to the piece goods department and later was placed in charge of the Victrola department. Ramsay entered the army in 1917. During his tenure, the army sent him to study textiles at Victoria University of Manchester, England. Upon his discharge in July 1919, he returned to work for his father at Ramsay Brothers Dry Good Company.

For over a century, the Ramsay name was synonymous with one of the most successful dry goods establishments in the Midwest, with stores in Carthage, Missouri; Iola, Kansas; Joplin, Missouri; Atchison, Kansas; Okmulgee, Oklahoma; Coffeyville, Kansas; McAlester, Oklahoma; and Beatrice, Nebraska. The stores continued operations through economic crises by doing business on a cash basis. The department store model made it possible for the middle class in towns to obtain better merchandise at a lower price. Volume purchasing coupled with heavy advertising, a fixed price policy, and money-back guarantee made it possible for the stores to pass on low costs to customers while realizing a good profit. During World War I, the Ramsay Brothers Dry Goods store in Carthage, Missouri arranged a Paris shopping service for American soldiers stationed in France. The combination of splendid integrity and progressiveness was the basic philosophy of the Ramsay stores. Ronald H. Ramsay learned these ideals from his father and uncle and continued to promote them during his tenure at the store.

Ronald H. Ramsay married Dorcas Carlisle on January 12, 1921 in Atchison at the home of her parents, William and Addie Baker Carlisle. Mrs. Ramsay was born in Atchison on March 28, 1894. She was educated there at the Midland Academy and attended Monticello College in East Alton, Illinois. Her father, William Carlisle, owned the Howell, Jewett & Company lumber firm, with holdings in Wisconsin, Arkansas, Texas, Oregon, and Washington. After their marriage, Ronald and Dorcas Ramsay resided at 909 Riverview Drive next door to her childhood home. Ramsay managed the family's dry goods store in Coffeyville, Kansas from 1928 to 1933. He returned to Atchison in 1933 and became president and manager of the Ramsay Brothers Dry Goods store there following the death of his father in 1934. On February 21, 1939 the store was completely destroyed by fire. Ronald Ramsay immediately rebuilt and reopened the store in November of the same year. The Ramsay Brothers Dry Goods Company was an important part of the Atchison retail business until it was sold in 1970.

In 1948, Ronald and Dorcas Ramsay built a palatial new home at 1415 Riverview Drive. Their new home was considered one of the most modern showplaces in northeast Kansas. Construction of the Ramsay house began in March 1948 and was completed one year later.³ According *The Atchison Daily Globe*, "Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay told the architect how many rooms they wanted, how they were to be located, and the architect constructed an exterior to fit the rooms." Not surprisingly, the article dubbed the house as "one of the finest and most attractive homes in Kansas."⁴

³ A frame dwelling was located on the property, southwest of the current house. This building was demolished upon completion the Ramsay house.

⁴ "New Ramsay Residence Spacious," *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 15 March 1949, p. 10.

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The house was built with few deviations from the original blueprints. A bedroom/living room suite planned for the southwest corner of the second story was altered to become just a bedroom and bathroom. A curved porch planned for the south end of the house was not built. An additional room was added to the northwest corner of the garage. The house today stands as built, except for the remodeled kitchen and interior cosmetic changes.

Mrs. Ramsay was very involved in Atchison affairs, taking a keen interest in the YMCA and Atchison Hospital until she died January 17, 1966. Ronald Ramsay married Catherine Gilmore in 1967 and maintained an active presence in Atchison affairs, notably the Atchison Hospital Association and the YMCA. The couple lived in the home until September 1969, when they sold it to the Atchison Hospital Association. Wayne O. Wallace, a local physician, purchased the home in 1975. He and his family lived there until 1986 when it was sold to Dr. John and Deborah Eplee, who raised their three children there. In 2004, the house was sold to current owners, Russ and Merry Thaden.



Figure 3. Ramsay house, shortly after construction

Atchison History

Atchison is positioned at a western bend of the Missouri River, a location that made it convenient to those traveling west when Kansas was still a territory. Incorporated in 1855, its history includes the rivalry between abolitionists and Missouri pro-slavery advocates, a two-year settlement in 1855 by the Mormons and visits by John Brown and Abraham Lincoln.

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Atchison had the advantage of a good steamboat landing and the best wagon road leading west, so the town flourished in the early days as a transportation center. Early freight shipments bound westward were brought from St. Louis to Atchison by steamboat and then hauled by ox or mule team across the prairie. The Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railway, founded in 1859, was a successful venture that established the city as the eastern terminus for a railroad system stretching west and south. Even very early mail delivery from the town to points west developed into a million-dollar business.

Atchison became a first class city in 1881. Industry flourished and construction reflected the town's prosperity. Many of the city's wealthier residents built new houses in the hilly area north of downtown. The town's reputation as a home to the affluent was reported in an 1898 article in the *Topeka Mail and Breeze* entitled "Atchison's Rich Folks," which described Atchison as possessing more rich men and rich widows than any other city in Kansas. In "Seeing Atchison," *The Kansas City Star* in 1914 discussed the large number of wealthy residents and the money raised for public buildings.

The financial panic of 1893, supplemented by an area drought, dealt a blow to several Atchison institutions, as it did to other Midwestern businesses, especially banks and railroads. Late in the 1890s, however, the improvement of agricultural prices and a general increase in wages and prices brightened the picture. Atchison's population increased between 1890 and 1900 and business trade followed suit.

The population of Atchison County dropped slightly every decade since 1900.⁵ This did not necessarily mean, however, that construction within the town was static. The town's successful citizens continued to invest in their properties and their neighborhoods. The town experienced a wave of commercial construction between 1910 and 1915 that included several large warehouses in the downtown area. Atchison in the late 1930s had a population of 13,000, with streets laid out in strict symmetry. The architecture of the town reflected that of most Kansas towns of its size, with a combination of Victorian houses and storefronts, and a gradual infiltration of "modern" commercial and public buildings. Construction on Atchison's first free bridge began in late 1937. The Mo-Kan Bridge spanning the Missouri River was dedicated on July 2, 1938. By the late 1930s, the town had become an important wholesale and jobbing center that focused on agricultural products and manufactured goods. The city ranked fourth in Kansas and tenth in the country in the production of hard wheat flour. A foundry established in 1871 was one of the largest in the country, engaged exclusively in the manufacture of locomotive parts. A new industry to the city was the manufacture of industrial alcohol for motor fuel. Other businesses included the production of overalls, leather goods, plumbing fixtures, eggs and poultry.⁶ The number of people employed in the city of Atchison actually increased between 1940 and 1950 in fields such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, wholesale and retail.⁷

⁵ Kansas State Board of Agriculture. *Kansas Agriculture Centennial Report, 44th Report, July 1, 1960 thru June 30, 1961*. Population is listed for Atchison County as 30,369 in 1900, 27,805 in 1910, 25,584 in 1920, 25,747 in 1930, 22,414 in 1940 and 20,171 in 1950.

⁶ Harold C. Evans, ed. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1984 reprint), 169.

⁷ *Kansas Statistical Abstract, 1970*. (Lawrence, KS: Institute for Social and Environmental Studies, University of Kansas, 1971), 96-97.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The property, encompassing 1.4 acres, is roughly bound by Riverview Drive on the east and south, by Jackson Park on the west and on the north by the south boundary of Block 20 of the Spring Garden Addition to the City of Atchison, Section 7 Township 6 South, Range 21 East.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Ronald and Dorcas Ramsay house.

Photographic Information

The following information is the same for all of the photographs:

1. The Ronald and Dorcas Ramsay House
2. Atchison County, Kansas
3. Merry Thaden
4. February 2005
5. Negatives and/or digital disk located at Kansas State Historical Society

The following information is applicable to individual photographs:

6. Northwest view
7. #1

6. Northeast view
7. #2

6. West view
7. #3

6. Entry, west view
7. #4

6. Dining room, southwest view
7. #5

DONALD Dorecas
Ramsay House
UTM COORDINATES
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49 MI. TO U.S.
NORTONVILLE 16

